

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

DDI-1352-75

19 May 1975

Senator Claiborne Pell
United States Senate
Committee on Foreign Relations
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Pell:

In your letter of 9 May 1975 you refer to the article by Sam Adams in the May issue of Harper's and ask for my comment on the allegation that I "'steadfastly ignored accurate intelligence' concerning enemy troop strength in the Vietnam War as part of an effort to avoid the unwelcome consequences from the revelation of correct but considerably higher figures for enemy forces."

You say you read the article with some dismay. I assure you that my reactions to the fact that Harper's published it and to the apparent acceptance of the charges by some responsible people are something considerably stronger than dismay. Therefore, I welcome this opportunity to deny categorically the validity of this direct attack on my personal integrity and the integrity of CIA as an institution. I do not know how I alone can prove to you that the charge against me is without foundation except to assert that it is false. I assure you that there is nothing in my whole professional career that I value more than my personal integrity.

In this connection you should be aware of an event which occurred shortly after the article was published. Mr. Adams called a CIA employee to solicit his reaction to the article. During the conversation Mr. Adams was asked why I was among the three individuals selected for special attack at the bottom of page 71 from which you quote. His

response was that this box was inserted by the editors of Harper's. Mr. Adams acknowledged that I was not the primary target of his attack. He said that the editors of Harper's advised him to aim as high as possible in the present CIA hierarchy in making his charge.

During the height of the controversy about the estimate of communist forces in South Vietnam discussed in Mr. Adams' article, I was Assistant Deputy Director for Intelligence. Although the subject of communist forces in South Vietnam was studied by analysts in the Intelligence Directorate, it was not one of the subjects I personally followed. I did not participate in the preparation of the estimate; in fact, the interagency estimate was produced by the Office of National Estimates which was separate from the Intelligence Directorate.

I was, however, aware of the issues being debated and was able to view the problem with some detachment. Essentially, the problem was that the evidence available as to the size of the elements of communist forces was too fragmentary to prove any of the various estimates. This resulted in official estimates expressed as wide ranges to reflect the inherent uncertainties and the objective and intuitive differences. Mr. Adams never really accepted the judgment that the evidence was insufficient to make definitive estimates. He would be satisfied with nothing but the official acceptance of his views.

As to the charge of cover-up, the record shows that this Agency, though not endorsing the full sweep of Mr. Adams' estimates and perceptions of communist forces in South Vietnam, did not withhold them. In fact, the different assessments of enemy strength--including those of CIA which were higher than those of other agencies and reflected much of Mr. Adams' work--were presented to the most senior levels of Government. Even by Mr. Adams' own account, he had unusual opportunities to present his views to his peers and the most senior officers in the Agency. He was also able to present his views during a number of major attempts to resolve interagency differences on the strength of enemy forces. These included conferences with the entire Intelligence Community and MACV and CINCPAC in Honolulu, Saigon, and Washington. Although Mr. Adams did much to

raise the level of official estimates during these discussions, he was not able to convince the other participants that the evidence he presented and the methodology he employed were sufficient to merit a complete endorsement of his views. Obviously, Mr. Adams has not been able to accept this fact.

It was in this context that I made the remark attributed to me on page 68 of the article. This was one of the few conversations I had with Mr. Adams and, as I remember it, I asked Mr. Adams whether it had ever occurred to him that perhaps everyone else might not be wrong and that he might be the problem. I then advised him to look into himself.

You state that your letter was written "in the interest of assuring that in the future national security is not jeopardized by the deliberate distortion of information or intelligence for bureaucratic or political purposes". I can assure you that I know of no case where the Agency's intelligence has been distorted for these or similar reasons and that I certainly would not be a party to such action.

In closing, let me simply note that the correct spelling of my name and the position I have held for the past four years are presented below. Both were wrong in Harper's.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

Edward W. Proctor

Deputy Director for Intelligence

25X1

cc: Director of Central Intelligence

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

May 9, 1975

Mr. Edward Procter
Chief
Research Directorate
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C. 20505

Dear Mr. Procter:

I have read with interest and some dismay the article by Sam Adams in the May issue of Harper's entitled "CIA Cover-up."

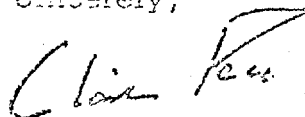
In the article, it is alleged that you "steadfastly ignored accurate intelligence" concerning enemy troop strength in the Vietnam War as part of an effort to avoid the unwelcome consequences from the revelation of correct but considerably higher figures for enemy forces. I would appreciate receiving your comment on this allegation.

I do not make this request to you in the spirit of muckraking or recrimination, but in the interest of assuring that in the future national security is not jeopardized by the deliberate distortion of information or intelligence for bureaucratic or political purposes.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and suggest that you might do likewise with a copy of your reply to me.

With thanks for your cooperation and every good wish.

Sincerely,



Claiborne Pell